

# SMW for ~~Fun and~~ Profit

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# General ways to make money from open source software

- Donations and grants
- Selling an enhanced version of the software
- Selling additional (closed-source) software (for SMW, this can include skins and wiki pages)
- Paid hosting
- Other paid online services (e.g., spam detection)
- Selling documentation (books)
- Merchandise
- Web ads
- Long-term support
- Consulting
- Paid development

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Bolded items are ones that I've done with SMW.

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:: Lead Software Architect for the Wikimedia Foundation '' {{ == ::  
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# Important to note

I'm leaving out the easiest, and sanest way to make money with Semantic Mediawiki: work for a company that pays you to use it.

# My consulting company: WikiWorks

- Founded in 2009
- About 10 people have worked as WikiWorks consultants.
- Done work for over 50 clients so far, including major companies like Texas Instruments, Google and Taser.

Consulting and paid development  
are both the best and worst ways to  
make money from open source.



# Why the worst?

Unlike with all the other options, you can't make money while you sleep.



# Why the best?

It's much easier to make money from those, than any other way.

Getting started is extremely easy: just add your name to one or more online listings. A website is always a good idea too.

There's also much more money to be made in consulting and paid development than anything else.

# A note about **long-term support**

Red Hat became the first billion-dollar open-source company, mostly by selling long-term support.

However, MediaWiki is not Linux.

Is selling long-term support a good business model for MediaWiki?

I don't know!

# Another reason why consulting and paid development are the best

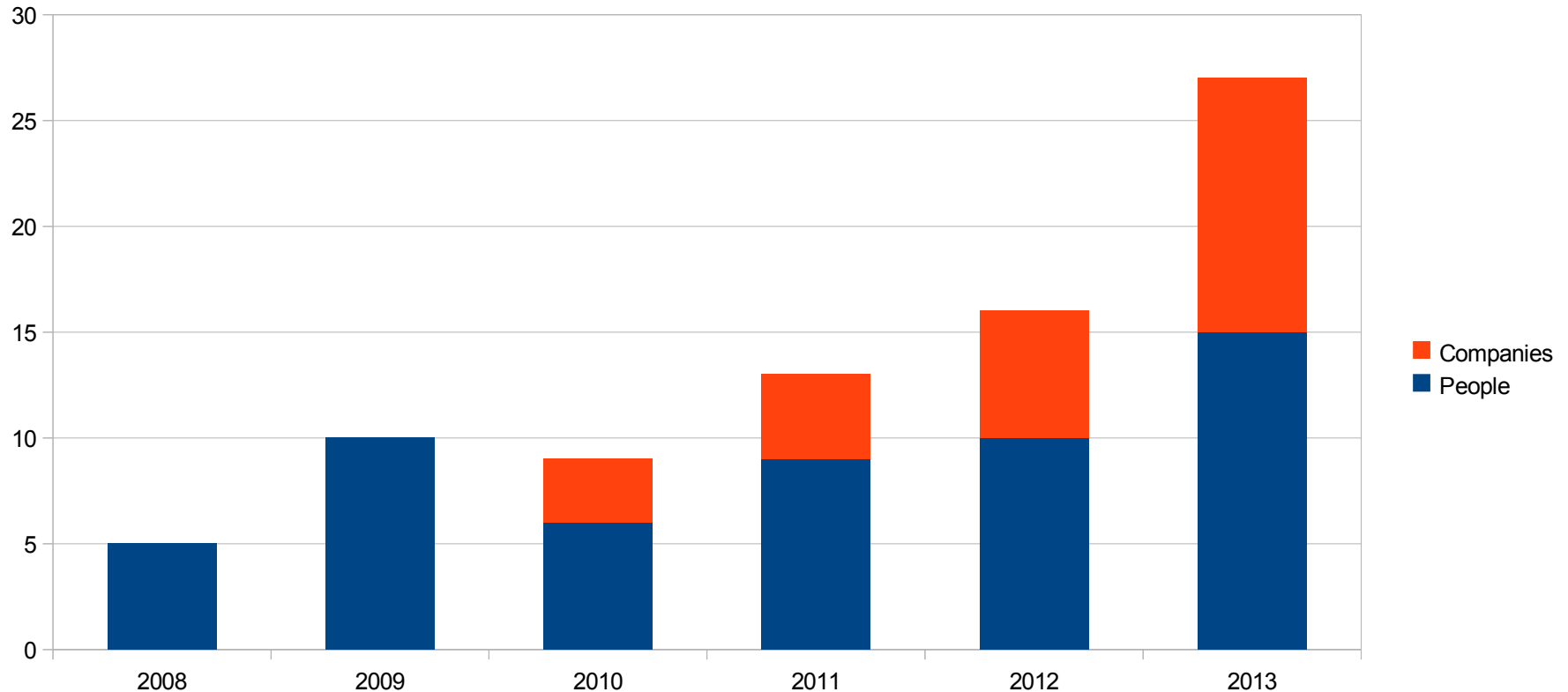
They help the software!

Consulting puts a big focus on the current limitations of the software, and helps to bring together people who can fix such limitations with people willing to pay for it.

# Extensions that WikiWorks has created for clients

- AdManager
- GoogleCustomWikiSearch
- Live Translate
- PageCreationNotif
- Push
- Semantic Watchlist

# SMW-based consulting is growing



Sources: SMW "professional support" page, Semantic Forms "Work for hire" section (for 2008 and 2009 figures)

(These numbers are not exact: some people/companies listed no longer do consulting work; some people/companies not on that list do SMW consulting work.)

# Tips for MediaWiki consultants



1) On your website, should you mention Semantic MediaWiki? MediaWiki? Wikis?

Opinion is somewhat divided on this, but most people seem to mention all of them.

I haven't seen any evidence that hiding this information is helpful.

2) From a business perspective, the bigger the client, the better.

Corollary: the worst clients, on average, are a single person.

You might hear this:

"I have an idea for a  
Wikipedia/Wikia/Craigslist/Yelp/eBay/  
Amazon competitor, that will run on  
(Semantic) MediaWiki. It needs to scale to  
get 100,000 hits a day. I just need some  
technical help putting it all together."

What you might think:

"That sounds great! This idea doesn't seem totally crazy. If it works out, I could be rich and (internet-)famous! And even if it doesn't, I'll still get my consulting fees."

The reality:

There's a better-than-50% chance that you will get screwed, the client will not pay you any money, and you will end up in an email flame war with them.

# Why is that?

Gargantuan projects are sometimes conceived by pioneers, and sometimes by delusional people.

“They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright brothers. But they also laughed at Bozo the Clown.”

- Carl Sagan

# Good advice:

- Stick with businesses, non-profits and government agencies as clients.
- Avoid projects where the wiki is the product designed to make money. (Unless it's your own project.)

### 3) Tips on custom development

- Insist on releasing the software as **open source** - reasonable clients will not have a problem with this.
- Write good code.
- If you're creating a new extension, make it as **generic** as possible.
- If you're modifying an existing extension, work to **integrate your changes** into the original extension! Otherwise your client will be screwed.



### 3) Tips on custom development

- In either case, it's helpful to **discuss the options with other developers/users** beforehand - maybe there's already some feature, or extension, that does what you're thinking about.
- ...which doesn't mean that you shouldn't create a new extension anyway. Examples: **Approved Revs** and **Semantic Watchlist**, both simpler alternatives to existing extensions

# Let's get to work!

